The Eternal Son

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A Foreword and an Explanation

In taking up the subject of the revelation in scripture of the Eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ, the writer needs great grace and subjection to Holy Scripture, so as not to go beyond what is written, nor on the other hand to neglect anything that has been revealed on this subject of such deep and vital importance.

Scripture, indeed, calls us to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). That there should arise among saints, professing to gather to the Lord's name, an occasion for contending for the truth of the Eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ is a cause of the gravest concern and sorrow. For the sake of any, who do not know how that occasion has arisen, a few words of explanation will be necessary.

In June 1929 a large number of brethren were gathered in a conference at Barnet, near London. There it was stated that the title, Son of God, could only be affirmed of the Lord Jesus Christ in incarnation. Scripture nowhere, it was stated, taught that He was the Eternal Son. If Scripture was silent, it was our place to be silent too. With scarcely a question this "new teaching" was received by the assembled brethren without protest of a public nature.

This new teaching was embodied in a volume on public sale. Therefore, it comes as a public challenge, and demands a public reply, especially in view of the revising of the "Little Flock" Hymn Book with the thought of bringing it into line with the "new light," thus making it a test of fellowship. We view this with the gravest apprehension.

It has been deeply laid on the writer's mind, he trusts the Lord, that some reply should be made, hence this pamphlet. His appeal will be to Scripture. It is the positive truth of God that can alone build up the believer on his most holy faith.

It will be necessary to make some quotations from the writings of the exponents of this "new light." In the body of the pamphlet these will be as sparing as possible.

In order that this may be so, the reader will find an appendix in which will be collected extracts from the writings and letters of the exponents of this "new light," so that the reader can judge the sad departure from the truth of God this novel teaching evidences. It is suggested that these should be carefully noted before perusing the pamphlet, so that the reader will be in a position to more intelligently follow what is written in refutation of the same.

A second appendix will be found containing extracts on the subject from the pens of gifted and spiritual servants of the Lord, whose words, founded on a weighty appeal to Scripture, are well worth considering.

The Eternal Son

In a quarter least expected it is being taught that we cannot assert that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God in the past eternity, and that in the Word of God this title is affirmed of Him only as incarnate. Thus, it is stated, Scripture being silent on the subject, it behooves the believer to be silent. Let it be made clear at the outset that happily there is no weakening as to the truth of the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, nor of the distinct place that He ever had in the Godhead, though it is stated that that place has not been defined.

It is, therefore, being seriously asked, Does it make any difference whether we believe the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God from all eternity, or that He became such only in incarnation, seeing that we all believe that He was a Divine Person from all eternity, who became Man in time?

We reply, Any teaching in Scripture relating to the Son of God must be of supreme and vital importance, To think that we may believe one of two alternatives on such a subject, and that it does not particularly matter which, is to treat the Word of God with gross indignity, and the Person of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ with a levity bordering on blasphemy that ought to be abhorrent to the simplest Christian. To Christ we owe the revelation of God in all His blessedness and nature. By His precious atoning death and His resurrection, the believer is brought into all the blessedness and joy of that revelation.

Let us see what is at stake. If this new teaching***** is true, it means that though we have in Scripture the truth that there is one God, and that the Godhead has been pleased to make Himself known in three Persons, who are one in substance, nature, thought, and purpose, yet these three Persons are not distinguished for us in Scripture, and their relationship One to the Other is unrevealed.

{***** *The denial of the Eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ is in reality no new teaching. Sabellius, who lived in Egypt about 250 A.D. taught this heresy, and was excommunicated. Alas! it has - at different times - appeared in one form and another since that day. That the teachers of the "new light" are careful to avoid the open denial of the Eternal Sonship, but content themselves with neither affirming nor denying this truth brings them pretty close to Sabellianism. If there is no affirmation of the Eternal Son in their writings, in their hymns, or in their public ministry and worship, it amounts to a virtual denial on such a theme. There is little difference between not affirming and denying.*

However, the teaching is now in the circle in which it is now alas! found, and we will so designate it, though it is in effect the revival of an ancient heresy.}

Is this true? That is the vital point at stake. It has been truly affirmed, If there is no eternal Son, there is no eternal Father. If the Lord Jesus Christ was not the Son of God till incarnation, then there was no Father till that moment arrived, for the titles, Father and Son, are contingent on relationship.

That the Spirit of God is called *"The ETERNAL Spirit"* in Hebrews 9:14, is beyond question; and again we read that in creation days, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2). So we have at least one Person in the Godhead distinguished for us from all eternity. Is it true that the Holy Spirit is distinguished for us in eternity, and not the Father and the Son?

Again, if this teaching is true we are deprived of all the blessedness and joy of the revelation of the eternal counsels of divine love between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit before time began.

No longer shall we be able to sing that majestic hymn, the outpouring of a heart delivered from the withering sterility of Unitarianism,

"Thou art the everlasting Word,
The Father's only Son,"
Nor shall we be able to sing,
"Son of God, Thy Father's bosom,
Ever was Thy dwelling place."

Will this be no loss? What shall be put in place of these holy sentiments that have formed our souls, and have been provocative of purest worship? Whatever the exponents of this so-called "new light" have in their minds, we solemnly believe that behind this teaching there is an attack of the enemy upon the Person of the Eternal Son of God – The Lord Jesus Christ, and an effort to rob the saints of truth, which appeals so powerfully to their most holy affections.

Two Dangers to be Avoided

1) Speculation as to the Person of Christ, or going beyond Scripture and attempting to know the unknowable. "No man knows the Son, but the Father" (Matthew 11:27). His name is "Wonderful," and no man can unravel this mystery. He is presented as an Object for adoration, not as a Subject for speculation.

2) On the plea of great caution and reverence to go to the other extreme, and to deprecate looking into Scripture to learn what is written as to Divine Persons. A little reflection should convince timid souls that they cannot afford to neglect any part of God's Word, and least of all the portions that speak of the "things concerning Himself." (Luke 24:27). All our blessing lies in Christ. The revelation of His Person carries with it the revelation of the Father, even as the revelation of the Father discloses to us the relationship of the Son.

Two Lines of Enquiry

There are two lines of enquiry that we shall seek to follow.

1) To call attention to Scriptures that directly prove the Eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2) To show that the direct Scriptures that establish this great truth are confirmed by the general trend of Scripture.

The Son of God in Time

It may be well at the outset to look at Scriptures that refer to the Son of God in time, for undoubtedly this title is given to the Lord Jesus Christ in time, as well as being descriptive of Him in eternity.

When the Virgin Mary cast about in her mind how the promise of the angel Gabriel should come to pass, that she a virgin should have the high honour of giving birth to the promised Saviour of the world, his reply was,

"The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God". (Luke 1:35)

In the attempt to prove that the Lord was not revealed as the Son of God before incarnation, one exponent of the "new light" emphasizes the word,

"SHALL," "shall *be called the Son of God."* This writer has fallen into the common error of reasoning to a negative. The emphasis surely in this passage is that the Infant born of the Virgin was none less than the Son of God. To say that the naming of the Holy Child as the Son of God *come into new circumstances* determines that the name does not apply to Him in eternity is pure sophistry, and poor sophistry at that. If Scripture warrants His being called the Son of God in a past eternity, then SCRIPTURE, and *Scripture alone* is our warrant.

Again, Psalm 2:7, quoted in Acts 13:33, and Hebrews 1:5, says,

"I will declare the decree: the LORD has said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee."

In the divinely given salute, *"Thou art My Son,"* do we not get the affirmation of One long in that relationship, but now brought into fresh circumstances, viz., those of Manhood? Surely the emphasis should be laid on the salute, *"Thou ART My Son"* — His new circumstances not altering the relationship. He ever was the Son.

We turn now to Scriptures that prove that He, who was the Son of God in incarnation, was ever the Son of God in eternity. His Manhood did not alter His Person. He was the same Person in this world that He ever was. He was "God … manifest in the flesh." (1 Timothy 3:16).

The Eternal Son

It is said that the exact words, THE ETERNAL SON, are not found in Scripture, therefore we must not affirm that He is such. But such a statement is foolish in the extreme. Words convey ideas. If the ideas conveyed by certain words (so these writers tell us) are not postulated in those exact words, then the ideas must be refused. This is an absurd stultification of those powers of sense and reason, with which God has endowed us.

If the truth of Eternal Sonship is taught in Scripture, and the words, ***The Eternal Son,*** accurately describe what is taught in the Word of God, then Scripture warrants our use of the expression.

A few illustrations will show how utterly foolish it is to assert that because a certain word or phrase is not in the Bible, therefore the idea that the word or phrase conveys is not in the Bible. We get the word, ATONEMENT, in the Old Testament over seventy times, but not ONCE in the New Testament. The only place, Romans 5:11, where it is rendered, Atonement, should be accurately translated, Reconciliation. It is thus rendered in the Revised Version, and in J. N. Darby's New Translation.

The absence of the word, ATONEMENT, in the New Testament does not prove that there is no atonement taught in that book. That would go too far altogether. It would be the destruction of Christianity. The fact is that we get the WORD, Atonement, in the Old Testament, but not the FACT of Atonement. We get the type, but not the antitype. We get the shadow, but not the substance. In the New Testament we do not get the WORD, Atonement, once, but we do get the FACT of Atonement, *and* mark it well, *nowhere else.*

In the same way, we get the truth of the TRINITY in the Scriptures, but not the word. Is the truth of the Trinity not to be affirmed?

The word, SUBSTITUTION, is not in the Bible. Is Substitution not in the Bible? Is Substitution not to be affirmed?

We do not get the word SOVEREIGNTY in the Bible. Is the sovereignty of God not to be affirmed?

Some Proof Texts

We now quote a few Scriptures that directly affirm the truth of the Eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"**God sent not His Son INTO THE WORLD** to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:17)

"**God sent His only begotten Son INTO THE WORLD**, that we might live through Him." (1 John 4:9)

"Say ye of **Him, whom the Father has sanctified, and sent INTO THE WORLD**, Thou blasphemest; became I said, I am the Son of God?" (John 10:36)

We confess to a shrinking from teaching that puts upon words an interpretation that their surface meaning does not bear. This "new light," in teaching that these verses do not affirm that the Lord Jesus Christ was Son of God till incarnation, puts a gloss upon Scripture that is mere casuistry.

If the Lord Jesus Christ was not the Son of God before incarnation, it could not be asserted that God sent Him "INTO THE WORLD." Scripture clearly asserts that God sent HIS SON" into the world." Words lose their meaning if this were otherwise. To put a gloss upon them opens the door for undermining the very truth of God in the most serious way.

We are told that the statement concerning Christ,

"Being sent into the world does not mean from another place literally, but that the FATHER does it."

The meaning of any passage can be frittered away by such treatment as this. It clearly is a matter of place. "INTO THE WORLD" is certainly geography of a definite nature. God sent His only begotten Son "INTO *the world*," into this particular tiny planet, out of all the myriad worlds that He has made — a mere speck of dust in the mighty universe — into this world, and none other.

Not only so, but in a particular spot in this world, in the land of Israel, yea, in a little place (small village) called Bethlehem, was the Savior born. Surely here is very definite geography. It is blessedly true that the Father sent Him, but it is also true that, if He came *into* another place, then He came *from* another place. Scripture states it in so many words:—

"He that comes FROM ABOVE is above all." (John 3:31)

But it is urged that the statement that "There was a man SENT from God, whose name was John" (John 1:6), throws light upon the passage we have been considering.

They say that John was SENT from God, yet it is clear he had no existence till he was born in this world. In like manner, they argue, that Christ was SENT, and just as John began his career in this world, so the blessed Lord began His career as the Son of God when He was born into this world. This is irreverent and shocking reasoning. One thing that makes these two statements widely different is forgotten. Of John it is stated, "There was a man SENT from God," but it does not say John was sent "INTO THE WORLD." John was sent *in testimony.* He was a full-grown man before He was sent. There is no geography affirmed in his case. The blessed Lord was "SENT INTO THE WORLD." He existed eternally before He became Man. John had no prior existence. The parallel, sought to be established, does not exist.

Further, John 17:18 is quoted in support of this new teaching.

"As Thou hast SENT Me into the world, even so have **I** also SENT them into the world."

Commenting on this a leading teacher of these new ideas says,

"The disciples, not of or in the world ***morally,*** *were sent into it in testimony. We may thus see that while it is said that the Father sent the Son, we cannot fairly deduce from this that He was actually in that relation [that is as Son] with God as 'in the form of God'"*

The fallacy in this statement lies in making the comparison that the Lord institutes between Himself and His disciples stretch beyond the teaching of the verse. The comparison is surely

limited to the thought of the Lord *in testimony* in this world, and the disciples, now the Lord was about to depart, being sent by Him into the world *in testimony.*

It is inexpressibly sad that the comparison that the Lord institutes between Himself and His disciples should be made the occasion for an attack on His glory as We do not like to believe that the attack is made willfully, but just because it may be made in ignorance of its real import, it is likely to affect many, who are under the glamour of this "new light."

"before the foundation of the world"

We now quote two passages that prove the Eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ from another standpoint.

"And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee **BEFORE the world** was." (John 17:5)

"Father … Thou lovedst Me **BEFORE the foundation of the world**." (John 17:24)

Here the Son, as the Son, is heard addressing the Father as the Father, and calling upon the Father to glorify the Son with His own self, with the glory which He, the Son, had with the Father BEFORE *the world was.* What is the plain unmistakable meaning of these words falling from the lips of the Son of God Himself?

We tremble to think of professed Christian teachers denying the obvious meaning of these words.

We reserve one passage that puts the matter in great detail,

"I came forth from the Father, and am come INTO the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." (John 16:28)

His coming FROM the Father is one statement; His entrance INTO the world is another. The one is a coming FROM; the other is a coming INTO. This teaching confounds the two.

Will it be contended that when the Lord left this world and went back to the Father, that He did not leave this world literally, and return to another place literally, even heaven? The verse is plain and explicit. The Son came from the Father; the Son came into the world. The Son left the world; the Son went to the Father.

The Eternal Father and the Eternal Son

If the Son only became the Son of God in incarnation, then the Father only became the Father when the Son became incarnate. This is the obvious conclusion to which this new teaching leads. One dislikes exceedingly having to put things so plainly, but the plainer the warning the better.

If there is a Father, there is a Son. If there is a Son, there is a Father. The titles - Father and Son - are co-relative terms involving relationship.

Scripture teaches that the Father was the Father before the Lord Jesus Christ was born into this world. The name of Father is the name of One of the Persons of the Godhead, distinguishable as such, before time began, and proved by the following Scripture.

"We … show unto you that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." (1 John 1:2)

Will it be said that "that Eternal Life," a Divine Person, only began to be with the Father when our Lord was born into this world? Really this theory lands its adherents into strange and anomalous contradictions. Was there ever a time when "that Eternal Life" began to be with the Father? Surely to ask the question is to answer it. The Eternal Life here is a Divine Person, our Lord Jesus Christ.

"And we know that the Son of God is come … This is the true God, and Eternal Life" (1 John 5:20), identifies "that Eternal Life" and "the Son of God" as one and the same blessed Person.

Being the Eternal Life, the Lord had no beginning, therefore He was from all eternity with the Father. "That the Eternal Life was *with the Father,"* proves that the Father was the Father then, and, if the Father was the Father then, the Son of God was the Son of God then. "That Eternal Life," "the Word" (John 1:1), "the Son of God" - one blessed Person - is distinguishable as such under these titles and relationships from all eternity.

We must ever remember there came a time when men had a revelation of these Divine Persons, but the Persons were not brought into existence by the revelation, but the revelation revealed what already existed from all eternity. Our souls bow before the blessedness of all this, and shrink from this new teaching as one would shrink from the scorching withering blasts of the desert.

"Thou art the everlasting word"

For instance, could there be a more barefaced denial of Scripture than the following?

"The 'Word' is an appellation under which the disciples spoke of the Lord. It was how they apprehended Him; God had become His own expression. The passage does not mean that He was the Word in eternity. He was the 'Word' to them. In eternity (the inscrutable) He was God."

This statement is as audacious in its affirmations as in its denials.

Where, we may ask, is there a line of Scripture to indicate that the disciples when they accompanied our Lord, ever spoke of Him as "the Word"? Never could they, or any other men, have conceived this wonderful Name.

It was a matter of ***revelation,*** used by two disciples; one, who never companied with the Lord on earth (Luke 1:2);***** the other, an apostle who wrote his gospel and epistles long after the Lord had returned to glory.

And even as revealed, who has grasped the full meaning of this wonderful title "the Word"?

{***** "Those, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses of and attendants on the Word" (J.N.D.'s New Translation)}

And in the face of the Bible statement, *"In the beginning WAS the Word,"* this rash expositor of the "new light" coolly tells us that the passage does not mean what it says, viz., that the Lord was the Word in eternity. The passage means what it says. Surely it is nothing less than present-day Modernism of the worst kind to deny the plain statement of Scripture. It is the turning back upon all that has hitherto been held dear as to the Eternal Word in the circle in which He moves.

Creation is Ascribed to the Son

The following Scriptures clearly ascribe creation to the Son as such.

"God … has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son [literally "In Son", that is when the Son spoke, God spoke — God the Son] … by whom also He made the worlds." (Hebrews 1:1)

"God … has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son … by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth." (Colossians 1:13-16)

The plain teaching of these verses is that the Son is the Creator. Only God can create. How plain it is that the Son of God is God the Son, eternally so in the very nature of things. Creation is never ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ save under the titles of "The Word" and "The Son".

As "The Word" He gives expression to God, and does so first of all in creation, long before the incarnation, disclosing God's "eternal power and Godhead" thereby; the heavens are "the work of His fingers." *This was done by the Son long BEFORE the incarnation.* As incarnate and in His death He has revealed God in His very nature. In creation God's fingers were revealed; in redemption, His very heart—His very Being, but revealed by the same blessed Person—the Son.

Never in all man's searching after God was He known, but we get the height of revelation in the wondrous words, **"God is love" (1 John 4:16).**

If God is love there must of necessity have been an outflow for that love to express itself from all eternity. Does not Scripture fully show that there were Father, Son and Holy Spirit—one God, yet in relationships beyond our comprehension, but not beyond our apprehension, between whom was the outflow of love One to Another, and with whom were divine counsels as to how to bring man into the circle of these divine affections. And we are asked to give up this blessed knowledge, for what?

Then again we are told that

"In our manner of speaking we use expressions such as the first, second, or third Person of the Trinity. But in doing so we must be careful not in the least to imply that in eternity, or in the Deity as such, there could be any such relative positions. Each "Person" of the Deity, as we say, is co-equal, co-eternal, co-existent, albeit distinct."

If, by this statement, the writer only meant to guard against the idea of inferiority of position in the use of the terms, first, second and third, well and good: but he certainly implies there is no revelation of any "relative positions" between Divine Persons.

And yet the Scriptures speak of *"The ETERNAL Spirit."* Is that not a relative position? They tell us, "In the beginning was the Word." Is that not a relative position? This writer tells us we must

not in the least imply that in eternity there could be relative positions in the Godhead. "That Eternal Life" that was *with the Father,* clearly in eternity, distinguishable as such, asserts that there was an Eternal Father, and there must be an Eternal Son to make that relationship possible, and this is asserted again and again as we have seen. We tremble as we read these denials of these fundamental truths under the guise of "new light." May the Lord have mercy on these men, who are moving in the direction of apostasy, little as they realize it.

"the only begotten son," and "the bosom of the father."

Another verse has come under notice by the exponents of this new teaching.

"No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." (John 1:18)

The comment upon this is as follows,

"'Who is in the bosom of the Father.' Note the 'is', not 'was'. Hymns talk about the Father sparing Him from His side, or that the Father's bosom ever was His dwelling place, but these thoughts are not in Scripture".

Note the positiveness of this last sentence. This writer, as we have already seen, is fond of reasoning to a negative. What right has he to say that because the verb "is" takes the form of the present tense, it shuts out the Son being ever in the bosom of the Father. Surely 'IS' lays the emphasis upon an eternal present. He was, He is, He ever will be in the bosom of the Father.

The Companion Bible, edited by an undoubted Greek scholar, says of this verse,

"Which is = He who is: like 'was' in John 1:1. In = into, Greek eis. This expression is a continued relationship."

A well-known revered teacher and scholar has written on this verse as follows:—

"He revealed God as He knew Him, as the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father. It was not only the character of His glory here below; it was what He was (what He had been, what He ever is) in the Father's bosom in the Godhead: and it is thus that He declared Him." (Synopsis J. N. Darby)

Yet another scholarly writer comments on this verse:—

"'The only begotten Son who is'—literally—'the One being' or 'abiding'—'in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him' (told Him out). The unchanging intimacy of the eternal relationship is here, that which qualifies Him as the perfect Revealer of God; according to what He was before made known to us to be—'the Word made flesh.'" (The Crowned Christ. F. W. Grant)

Such thoughts expand the affections, and feed the soul, but this whittling down of the truth of the Eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ withers the affections and leaves the soul empty and cold.

We now come to the expression, *"Only begotten Son."* We have seen already that this is a title belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ from all eternity.

"God sent His only begotten Son into the world." (1 John 4:9)

He was the "only begotten Son" *before* being sent, or else He could not, as such, have been sent INTO THE WORLD. But clearly the expression, *"only begotten"* does not refer to derivation, nor does it denote inferiority.

It does not, and cannot denote derivation, for Scripture plainly asserts the Eternal Being of the Lord Jesus Christ in such a passage as:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." (John 1:1-3)

The Son of God was God the Son, underived, eternally existing.

Then again we read:

"Unto the Son He says, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." (Hebrews 1:8)

But this is quoted from Psalm 45:6, and Hebrews 1:8, proves that it was addressed to the Son *then*, a thousand years before the incarnation.

He, the Son, is addressed as God. Can God be derived? Can there be an inferior God? There can be only one God, and if the Godhead has been pleased to reveal Himself in eternal relationships, the Persons sustaining those relationships must in the nature of things be underived and co-equal.

What then is the meaning of the expression, "only begotten"?

If the Son is underived, as Scripture states, what is the meaning of "only begotten"? There is a passage that greatly helps to an understanding:—

"By faith Abraham, when He was tried, offered up Isaac: and He that had received the promises offered up His ONLY BEGOTTEN SON." (Hebrews 11:17)

Here is the very expression in this Scripture. We know that Isaac was not Abraham's only, or even his first begotten, son. Ishmael was that. It is evidently used as a term of strong endearment, and as setting forth a unique and pre-eminent position. Scripture forbids its being used in the case of the Son of God in the sense of derivation, or generation.

Nor is the Son inferior to the Father. It might be thought unnecessary to point this out, but a writer of this new teaching says,

"As before men he speaks of His life as given, His words are given, He takes a place of inferiority to the Father. It has been suggested that this is Sonship in time or revelation, and that Eternal Sonship means something quite different. Is this not a weak inference?

The expression, "A place of inferiority to the Father," is false and offensive in the extreme. *Dependence* is one thing. *Inferiority* is another. How could "God … manifest in the flesh" take a place of inferiority?

As a lowly dependent Man in this world of sin and sorrow, the blessed Lord took the place, not of inferiority, but of *subjection,* to His Father, receiving from Him the words He should speak, and direction for the acts He should perform—a wonderful mystery, but one that endears the Lord to the hearts of His own, the contemplation of which attracts us to Him, as nothing else

does. But inferior? Never! On the contrary we find the Father committing all judgment to the Son, so that "All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." (John 5:23)
We can only hope that the writer, who has allowed himself to dishonour his Lord in this solemn way, will see the gravity of what he has written, and seek mercy from the Lord.
"Add thou not unto His words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." (Proverbs 30:6), are intensely serious words in this connection.

"Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent"
In support of the false idea that the Son only becomes such in incarnation, the following verse is pressed into service.
"And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." (John 17:3)
It has been urged that here it says, *"JESUS CHRIST, whom Thou hast sent,"* and that He was not *Jesus Christ* till incarnation.
True, the angel of the Lord said to Joseph, "Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)
As the Holy Child born into this world, the angel directed what His name should be. But what does His name mean? *"Jesus"* means *"Jehovah Saviour."* Was He not Jehovah before He became incarnate? Was He not ever Jehovah, which means the eternal I AM?
Does not Isaiah 45:21, put the name of *God* and the title, *Saviour* together long before the incarnation, and "Jesus" means "God, the Saviour"?
The title, *Christ*, means THE ANOINTED. Are we to be told that the Lord was not THE ANOINTED in the counsels of a past eternity? The Psalmist Asaph knew better when he wrote:—
"Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right hand, upon the Son of Man who Thou madest strong for Thyself." (Psalm 80:17)
Again we read,
"The second man is the Lord from heaven." (1 Corinthians 15:47)
What He was from all eternity, and the manifestation or revelation of what He ever was, are sadly confused by the exponents of this teaching. They begin by reasoning to negatives, telling us that it is wrong to affirm that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Eternal Son, that if Scripture is silent we must be also silent, though we have seen that Scripture is not silent by any means. From non-affirmation the tendency is to slide into open denial, indeed this is the only goal they can legitimately arrive at.
We can understand why the Lord speaks of Himself as *"Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."* Our Lord is speaking of the way in which He became known to men, revealing the Father in the manifestation of Himself. He says:
"If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also." (John 14:7)

"He that has seen Me has seen the Father." (John 14:9)

Melchisedec like unto the Son of God

A very plain assertion of Eternal Sonship is found in Hebrew 7:3:—

"Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end life; but made like unto the Son of God; abides a priest continually."

It has been sought to fill in all these details in time as being in contrast to the priests under the order of Aaron. With them it was necessary to prove their descent, to have a priest for father, and a mother of a priestly family. But Melchisedec comes mysteriously upon the scene, and as mysteriously leaves it, no one knowing what his parentage was, what his descent was, when he was born nor when he died, so that he might be a type of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Our Lord now exercises priestly functions after the type of the Aaronic order. Not being of the tribe of Levi He could not, as Scripture states, be a priest after that order. He is of the order of Melchisedec, who was a priest and a king upon his throne, a type that will be fully set forth in Christ in His millennial kingdom. As a king He will represent God in government; as a Priest He will sustain His people in the presence of God.

A little attention to Scripture will show that these explicit details go much further than drawing a contrast between the Melchisedec and Aaronic orders of priesthoods. They set forth the Eternal Son, who became Man, who made atonement for sin, and now lives to make intercession for His people, and who "abides a priest continually."

As to the priests after the Aaronic order, it could not be said of them, that they had "neither beginning of days nor end of life." It was necessary to declare their descent, their father and mother, but "without beginning of days nor end of life" certainly did not, and could not, characterise them. We read:—

"And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to remain by reason of death." (Hebrews 7:23)

They were born; they died. "Without beginning of days nor end of life" cannot refer to the priests of the Aaronic order.

Nor can it refer to Adam. True, he had neither father nor mother, but he had "beginning of days" and "end of life." This expression, then, shuts out all but an eternally existent Person.

There has been One Person in this world of whom the description fits absolutely, and only One, and that is the Eternal Son of God – the Lord Jesus Christ. Melchisedec, who lived two thousand years before the birth of Christ in this world, was "made like unto the Son of God *"— the Son of God, who is thereby affirmed as being in existence THEN.*

We read:—

"He [Melchisedec] was made a priest, like—in his priestly character—to the Son of God; but, AS YET, the latter is in heaven". (Synopsis. J. N. Darby)

If we wish to paraphrase the majestic opening words of John's Gospel,

"In the beginning was the Word", how better could it be said than in the words of inspiration?
"Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life "
Melchisedec was not the Son of God, for He was "made LIKE unto the Son of God." Doubtless he was a man who lived and died, and who appeared mysteriously on the scene, and as mysteriously disappeared, so as to fill out the type.
Does the description fit the Lord Jesus Christ as becoming Son of God only in incarnation? Alas! that one has to speak so plainly to show the folly of this new teaching. We say it with the utmost reverence that the blessed Lord in His condescending grace in coming into the world had a mother. He had "beginning of days" and "end of life" as a Man down here. Who has not felt the pathos of the Scripture,
"He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken." (Isaiah 53:8)
But as the Son presented to us in John's gospel, the Eternal Son of God, the description fits exactly. There is no mention in that gospel of reputed father or of His mother, for as the Eternal Son of God He was underived. "In the beginning was the Word." There could be no genealogy there, as in Matthew and Luke; no mention of father or mother, "no beginning of days nor end of life." There was the affirmation of eternal underived existence.
So if our Lord is to be a permanent satisfying priest He must be a Divine Person, "the Son of God," as well as Man, who made atonement, and this is guarded in this very striking way. He lives for ever "After the power of an endless life" (Hebrews 7:16),

The Testimony of the Old Testament

Let us turn to the Old Testament, and see if it confirms us in what we have gathered from the New Testament. We have been amazed to find how much was more than hinted at on this immensely vital and fundamental subject in the Old Testament.

The Name of God in the Plural

As the Hebrew language is so largely the vehicle of divine inspiration, we believe the directing hand of God can be traced in its construction in a very remarkable way. This is clearly seen in the fact that there are three numbers in the Hebrew language:—
The singular — one only.
The dual — two only.
The plural — three at the least, or more as the case demands.
Why should there be three numbers in the Hebrew language, not otherwise a full language? We believe it is to directly emphasize the truth that there are three Persons in the Holy Trinity. The name of God *(Elohim)* occurs in the plural about 2,500 times; whereas in the singular (God, *El)* a little over 300 times. We know how stoutly the Jews contended for the thought of one God,

shutting out the truth of the three Persons in the Godhead. How is it that in their own Scriptures the thought of the three Persons in the Godhead is emphasized by putting the name of God so much more often in the plural than in the singular? Surely it is God's direct overruling hand.

In the very first verse in the Bible how clear is the hand of inspiration:—

"In the beginning God [Elohim, plural] created [singular] the heaven [dual] and the earth. (Genesis 1:1.)

The plural noun sets forth the three Persons in the Godhead. The singular verb emphasizes the fact that though there are three Persons in the Godhead, there is but ONE God, a mystery we can never fathom.

This is remarkably seen in Deuteronomy 6:4, where the oneness of God is emphasized:—

"Hear, O Israel; the Lord [Jehovah, singular] our God [Elohim, plural] is one Lord [Jehovah, singular].

Seeing Scripture gives us the name of one of the Persons of the Godhead as "the Eternal Spirit," we can, in the light of what the New Testament affirms, know that we have here the Eternal Father, the Eternal Son and the Eternal Spirit. Shall there be an Eternal Spirit, and not an Eternal Father and an Eternal Son?

We read,

"The Eternal God [Elohim, plural] is thy refuge." (Deuteronomy 33:27)

What refuge should we have, if there were no Father to send the Son; no Son to die on the cross as the Mediator between God and men, "the Man, Christ Jesus"; no Holy Spirit, the only Power by which we can enter into the apprehension of divine things.

An Affirmation of the Trinity

There is a very remarkable affirmation of the Trinity in Isaiah 48:16,

"I have not spoken in *secret* from the beginning; from the time that it was [the beginning, eternity] there am I [the affirmation of Deity], and now the Lord [Adonahy, plural,] God [Jehovah, singular], and His Spirit has sent Me."

Here we have three Persons — the Lord God, the Holy Spirit and the Sent One. Is this not an Old Testament foreshadowing of the Father sending the Son to be the Saviour of the world? Can any one be so blind as not to see how the New Testament unfolds what is hinted at here, and hinted at pretty plainly. The idea of "SENT" in connection with the coming of the Son of God is very prominent in the New Testament. This thought runs like a golden thread through the whole of that wonderful prayer of the Lord to His Father in John 17. It is just the refrain of Isaiah 48:16—"HATH SENT *ME*."

It is a noticeable feature of the Old Testament that it often states events that are still future, as if they were already fulfilled as in this case—*"The Lord HATH sent Me."*

This is seen, by way of illustration, in the well-known prophecy of the atoning death of our Lord Jesus Christ in Isaiah 53:5:—

"He WAS wounded for our transgressions; He WAS bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace WAS upon Him; and with His stripes we ARE healed."
Again,
"Thou HAST brought Me into the dust of death".
"They PIERCED My hands and My feet." (Psalm 22:15-16)
Centuries rolled their course before these Scriptures were fulfilled. And yet they are written as if they were already fulfilled. We ask, Was there no Son to do the Saviour's part? Was there no Son to be sent? From all eternity there surely was.

"The lord is my shepherd"
It is astonishing how the Old Testament anticipates the New Testament in so many ways. Jehovah, the Shepherd of Israel of the Old Testament, is Jehovah, the Shepherd of the New Testament. Genesis 49:24 says, "From thence is the SHEPHERD, the Stone of Israel."
Again, "The Lord is my Shepherd." (Psalm 23:1)
The whole of this wonderful Psalm is simply the elaboration of this opening statement.
Again, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth." (Psalm 80:1)
Has this beautiful prayer — "Shine forth" — not been answered in the coming into this world of the Shepherd of John 10?
Again Ezekiel 34 is a most remarkable chapter, which might well be pondered over by those, who seek to be under shepherds. Does not the Old Testament anticipate the New Testament?
Is not the New Testament a development of the Old Testament? Here is a striking case in point.
"And I will set up ONE SHEPHERD over them, and He shall feed them." (Ezekiel 34:23)
"They shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold [literally flock], and ONE SHEPHERD." (John 10:16)
Finally we draw attention to that passage full of prophetic power and pathos,
"Awake, O Sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, says the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn Mine hand upon the little ones." (Zechariah 13:7)
The teachers of this "new light" would have us think of the Persons of the Godhead in a past eternity as wrapt in mystery, never to be unveiled to us, but in such passages as these we get, as it were, shadows on the wall outlining to us what we see in its fulness of revelation in the New Testament.
In this last Scripture we get the judgment of the cross foreshadowed; the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ asserted, He was God's Fellow; His Manhood affirmed, for God's Fellow is so addressed, and all in connection with the Shepherd character of the Lord.

"What is his son's name? If thou canst tell?"

We come now to a very striking Scripture:—

"Who has ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? who has bound the waters in a garment? who has established all the ends of the earth? what is His name, and WHAT IS HIS SON'S NAME, if thou canst tell? (Proverbs 30:4)

Here we get a most remarkable foreshadowing of the Lord in the Old Testament, and an affirmation in an indirect way, and its very indirectness making it all the more forcible, of the Eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ. The teachers of the "new light" are fond of drawing attention to the tense of the verb. Will they note particularly it says here, *"What IS His Son's name?"*

The beginning of the verse asks, "Who has ascended up into heaven, or descended?" As much as to say that no mere man is sufficient for this. This is beyond His mightiest effort. But does it not awaken in the mind the words of the Lord to Nicodemus,

"No man has ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven." (John 3:13)

Then the verse goes on to affirm the creatorial power and wisdom of God, and then asks the striking question, "What is His name, and what is His Son's name?"

That question surely is answered fully in the New Testament, but by revelation, by the coming into this world of Christ. We may well ask, Is this a mere rhetorical question, with no particular meaning behind it, or is it a question conveying information of a positive nature, that God has a Son, an Eternal Son? We believe the latter. We believe that there was an Eternal Son, who is foreshadowed in this way. It would be dishonouring to God to believe that the question does not convey an affirmation of the relationship between God and His Son.

We are reminded in the next verse that "Every word of God is pure", and warned in the following verse, "Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

It is an intensely solemn thing to refuse in any way the outshining of the Person of the Eternal Son, as seen in the Old Testament Scriptures. And much more so, the revelation which has shone out in all its effulgence in the New Testament.

"Christ … the Wisdom of God."

There is still the presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ as Wisdom in Proverbs 8 to be considered. It has been urged by the teachers of this "new light" that Wisdom here is not a Person, but a quality. One verse, however, proves that it is the presentation of a Divine Person:—

"**I love** them that love **Me**; and those that seek **Me** early shall find **Me**." (Proverbs 8:17)

It is possible for a person to love a quality. A man may love truth, honesty, beauty, etc. But a quality cannot love. Here Wisdom says, "*I love them that love Me."* Wisdom can love. Wisdom has a heart of affection. A quality is an abstraction that can only be realized when brought into

the region of the practical. A quality cannot love; a Person can. Thank God, we are not left here with a mere abstraction, but a real living Person is presented to us.

Who is this Person? In answer He says, "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." (verse 23.)

Here we have an affirmation of Godhead, of One existing from all eternity.

Have we any further light as to This wonderful Person? He again answers us,

"I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." (verse 30.)

Here we have the assertion of Wisdom, a Divine Person, that He ever was the delight of God, and that He rejoiced continually in His presence. Surely we can say in the light of the New Testament that we have here the Father rejoicing in the Son, and the Son rejoicing in the Father. The whole of Scripture seems to fall into line with the full revelation we get in the New Testament.

When the voice was heard from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," (Matthew 3:17), this surely was no new thing, something that only began in incarnation, but expressed that which ever was from all eternity. If God is love He must have had an Object or Objects on which to express that love from all eternity. His very nature demanded it. So we have Divine Persons in the Godhead, and in this remarkable passage an indication of the exercise of divine affections in past eternal ages.

But God would not rest in the complacency of His own love, but would express it to men, and bring men into the warmth and blessedness of the revelation of Himself. "God is love." This, too, is foreshadowed in Proverbs 8 — "Rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were with the sons of men." (verse 31.)

Does this not foreshadow the incarnation of the Son of God, and His wondrous death upon the cross?, How else could there be delights with the sons of men on any other ground than that of atonement? How else could those delights be known?

Then the Scripture bursts forth into that which is evangelical. The one that finds Wisdom finds life. Wisdom has builded her house (reception); hewn out her pillars (stability); killed her beasts (sacrifice); furnished her table (satisfaction); mingled her wine (joy); sent forth her maidens (invitation); cries upon the highest place of the city (importunity). Does this not allude to the coming of the Son of God into this world to die an atoning death, and in resurrection sending forth world-wide the tidings of redeeming love? (Mark 16:15).

Moreover, 1 Corinthians 1:30 identifies the Wisdom of Proverbs 8 as the blessed Lord Himself:— "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us WISDOM, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

So we see in the Old Testament we have **The Sent One, The Shepherd, The Son, The Wisdom.** Is there not ample light from the Old Testament to identify the Eternal Son of the New Testament as the Eternal Son of the Old Testament. We are astounded at the strong shadows, which enable us to trace the very lineaments of the blessed face of the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.

"The name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"

Lastly we turn to the New Testament for an instance as to how the teaching of this "new light" lands its adherents into impossible and ridiculous positions. We refer to the formula of baptism:— "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19)

What position does this put the adherents of this new teaching in? It means the incongruity of baptizing in the name of the Father, who, according to their teaching, only became such little more than two thousand years ago; in the name of the Son, who only became such, so they say, little more than two thousand years ago; in the name of the Holy Ghost, who is "The ETERNAL Spirit." How harmonious to baptize in the name of the Eternal Father, of the Eternal Son, of the Eternal Spirit.

Will the reader pardon the crudity of putting the alternative in such a matter-of-fact way. It needs great plainness of speech to convince those infatuated by this new teaching that it is untrue and unscriptural, irreverent, and, in the ultimate result, blasphemous.

We add a confirmatory extract:— "We are baptized in the name of, the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, (Matthew 28:19). This carries with it the formal declaration of the mystery of the Godhead; the Son being a divine Person (in the recognition or declaration of this sentence), as is the Father, and as is the Holy Spirit." (The Son of God. J. G. Bellett)

May God give us wisdom to bow to the plain teaching of Scripture. Herein alone lies our blessing and safety.

We finish our task with a far deeper sense of the gravity of the departure from the truth involved in this new teaching than when we began. The cumulative evidence in the Scriptures of the Eternal Sonship of our blessed adorable Lord Jesus Christ is so overwhelming, that to deny it, or even to refrain from affirming it, is to lose the true Person of the Son of God. We stand aghast as we contemplate such teaching emanating from the quarter in which it does.

Instead of the “spiritual intelligence in the meetings [Barnet, June 1929] warranting attention being called to it," as the one, who brought this new teaching forward, puts it, it only disclosed the low spiritual condition of those assemblies, that such an attack on the Person of the Son of God should have been tolerated for one moment. Surely the instructions of Scripture are binding, "If any come unto you, and bring not this doctrine [that is, the doctrine of Christ] receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that bids him God speed is partaker of His evil deeds." (2 John 10, 11)

Appendix 1.

Extracts from recent statements on the Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ:

To show there is just cause for serious alarm, as to the new teaching on this holy theme, we append a few extracts from recent statements, which set forth the so-called "new light" that has aroused such deep distress and exercise amongst many of the Lord's people. In the published Readings of the Barnet Conference, June 1929, we read as follows:—

"I do not know that there is such a term in Scripture as eternal Sonship. 'Son of God' is a question of a Person. The Son of God is announced in Scripture after the Lord Jesus was here. In Luke it says, 'The holy thing also which shall be born shall be called the Son of God.' That is what Luke says, meaning that that should come out in Him in due course. Jesus asserts His relation as Son at the age of twelve in saying, 'My Father's business,' but the Father's voice announcing it is at His baptism."

"What the Scriptures say is, 'In the beginning was the Word.' It does not say 'the Son.' In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' (John 1:1), that is to say, His eternal personal existence is stated. He was there personally in the beginning. To go so far as to give Him a personal name or designation then, is going beyond Scripture it seems to me, but that the *Person was there* is the great point. To give Him a name is another matter, but the Person was there."

* * * *

"There is the assertion of His relation with His Father as Son at the age of twelve years, and then God Himself calls Him Son as He was thirty years old: 'Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee have I found My delight.' This is what He was here. Luke presents Him in that way; and John speaks of His sonship only *after* He is said to have become flesh."

"I know of no other way in which He [the Son of God] is so spoken of in Scripture than in manhood."

"As man the designation 'Son' undoubtedly regards Him in this light [that is, as Son of God], but to make it apply to Him as 'in the form of God' is another thing entirely."

Question. "You would not carry the title 'Word' into what He was in deity?"

Answer. "No. He had acquired that name among the saints. So in Hebrews 1, you get a variety of the glories of Christ mentioned, but they are all taken from the statements of saints, that is, they are all taken from the Psalms, as if God loves to bring in the saints to establish the great truth of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ."

How audacious many of the remarks in the above extracts appear, when compared with the sublime statements of Scripture. There we read, "In the beginning was the Word," "The Word was God," "The Word was with God," "The Word was made [became] flesh" —statements which plainly declare that this divine Person was the Word from all eternity, and before ever He became

Man. Again, what are we to think of a professed teacher who, in the light of these Scriptures, can calmly state that the Word is simply a name that our Lord "acquired among the saints"?

Possibly, however, the most flagrant contradiction of Scripture is the remark that the varied glories of Christ mentioned in Hebrews 1, "are all taken from the statements of saints." Think of the solemnity of making such a remark about statements found in an Epistle that, above all others, emphasises the great fact that God, Himself, is the Speaker. For this reason the very name of the saint used to write the Epistle is not even mentioned. The very quotations of chapter 1, which this "new light" tells us are "taken from the statements of saints" are specially said to be the statements of God. "Said He (5); "He says" (6); "He says" (7); "He says" (8); "said He" (13).

Such treatment of Scripture surely degrades revelation, weakens the power of the word over the conscience, and beclouds the minds of the saints. How needed the warning, "See that ye refuse not Him that speaks … from heaven "(Heb. 12:25).

Again we find the following statement:—

"You cannot give names to, or define relations between, divine Persons before incarnation. You have to go by Scripture."

Going to Scripture, as the speaker suggests, we, in common with a great number of God's people, reach an exactly opposite conclusion. There we read of "the Eternal Spirit," "The Word was God," and "That Eternal Life which was with the Father,"—this last quotation involving Eternal Sonship, for the term Father is conditional on that relationship.

Further, we learn that the following statement has been made by an exponent of this "new light":—

"Scriptures such as these [Hebrews 1:5; John 5:19, 26; John 14:28] preclude the idea of this name, Son, applying to Him as in the condition of Deity, as in the form of God. 'The Son' is a name given in time, but He, who is described thus, is God."

We are told that this teaching neither denies nor affirms the Eternal Sonship. Here, however, it is plainly stated that certain Scriptures "preclude the idea." What, we may ask, is this but a blank denial of Eternal Sonship?

Two further extracts from the writings of this teacher call for serious comment. They are as follows:

"J.N.D. clearly held to our Lord's 'eternal sonship,' but he seems to have had a remarkable sub-consciousness that Scripture treats of sonship as applying to Him as in the flesh as Man only (See Notes and Comments, Vol. vii. page 7), indeed all his comments on John 1-3 pp. 1-68, also Vol. ii. p. 423. But in his teaching he held strongly to the Lord's eternal Sonship, associating it with His eternal personal existence. It seems to have been in his mind as unquestionable, without reconciling the unqualified statements of the Lord as the Son, implying relative inferiority to the Father, as in John 5 and Mark 13."

"It *[that is the new teaching that the Lord Jesus is Son only in incarnation]* is a most weighty subject and I have no doubt the spiritual intelligence in the meetings [*that is the Barnet*

Conference, June 1929] warranted attention being called to it. What I expressed has been in my mind for at least twenty-five years; it came to me through F. E. R., when he was in America in 1902. It came out in a Reading, but was not included in the printed *notes.* J. N. D. evidently had the same thought, although, like F. E. R. (Mr. Raven had the thought later, I think), he generally treated the subject as commonly accepted. I refer to "Notes and Comments," Vol. vii., p. 7. 'Nor do I see,' he says, 'that in this character (John 1:14) He is spoken of as Son save as known in the flesh.' He guards this afterwards in a note, but the text remains."

The above extracts contain such serious imputations against an honoured servant of the Lord, that they cannot be allowed to pass unchallenged. An unworthy attempt is made to allay the fears of those, who are naturally alarmed at this teaching, by suggesting that, though Mr. Darby definitely denied this teaching in his writings, yet, in his innermost soul it had his approval. We are asked to believe that in his ministry he avowed certain truth concerning the Person of our Lord in the strongest terms, while in his inner being he held exactly the opposite. We believe this to be an unwarrantable aspersion upon this man of God.

Let us, however, turn to the passage in "Notes and Comments," Vol. vii. page 7, on which these allegations have been based. First let it be remembered that the "Notes and Comments" were never written for the press. The Volumes consist of rough notes written, from time to time, by Mr. Darby for his own use. In consequence the sentences are often obscure, and the language abstruse, calling for careful attention, if we are to glean the writer's meaning. In the passage alluded to, Mr. Darby is writing on the verse, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). As to this he remarks as follows:—

"Christ is the consummation of glory, but it is the Father's glory, while it is His therefore as 'an only begotten with a father' … Here He is not known; His manifestation, His dwelling among us, was the question; but this is *what* the glory *was.*"

Let us note that the italics are J.N.D.'s, and they draw particular attention to the fact that the manifested glory *existed before the manifestation.* The teacher of this new light will not affirm that there was a Son of God before incarnation; whereas Mr. Darby says, "But this is *what* the glory *was,*" clearly meaning that the Lord was the Son before He was manifested as such. Mr. Darby goes on to write as follows:—

"Nor do I see that in this character He is spoken of as Son save as known in the flesh. He is spoken of previously as the Word, etc.; now as Son."

It is true that when the Son of God was manifested in incarnation, that it was *then* that the truth of Sonship came out in its fulness. But the revelation of the Son shows us that He who became flesh, and was hailed as the Son of God in time, was indeed the Son of God in eternity. His Person was unchanged. The Lord Himself affirms it again and again.

As we have seen, the teacher of this "new light," in referring to this passage admits that Mr. Darby "guards this afterwards in a note" but, he says, "The text remains." Thus the false

meaning, that the footnote was written to guard against, is read into the text; and the text, thus perverted to support the false teaching, is treated as authoritative, while the footnote is brushed aside as of little account. Yet, when we examine this footnote, we find it guards the truth of the Eternal Sonship in a strong and almost vehement fashion. It clearly shows that whilst the Lord was not known as the Son until incarnation, yet the glory of that relationship WAS *before the manifestation.* Let us, however, append the footnote, lacking nothing in vigour or clearness, and contradicting flatly what this teacher of "the new light" would falsely seek to draw from the words in the text. J. N. D. writes as follows:—

"I read this over, fearing lest there might in human expression be any colour for that approach to Sabellianism [see footnote on page 8 of this pamphlet] which is not uncommon in connection with the term *Son* [J. N. D.'s italics], which I believe to destroy the basis of all truth, but if taken simply it is free from this danger (I hate the heresy, and would guard against the fibre of its roots), and I think takes the truth out of the hands of the heretics. Still the manifestation of Him is as 'an only begotten with a father'; and what is still stronger as to the fact, 'the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the father.' The confusion is in not seeing He is Son in creation as well as in redemption, and the order of both, and that He redeemed as Son what He created as Son."

Here we get more than Mr. Darby's sub-conscious mind. We have the strong assertion of his belief in the eternal Sonship of Christ as taught in Scripture. Moreover, he denounces as heresy the teaching conveyed in the extracts we have just quoted from the exponents of this "new light." We heartily agree with Mr. Darby's strong stand in this matter. We cannot think that this teacher has handled this passage from Mr. Darby's notes in an honest manner. Whilst bound to notice the footnote, he has dismissed it with an airy gesture, and fastened on Mr. Darby's words a meaning that that writer plainly, and emphatically, states they do not bear. Is this straightforward? We leave the reader to judge for himself. In spite of these plain statements by Mr. Darby this teacher does not hesitate to say of this "new light" that, "It seems to have been in his [Mr. Darby's] mind as unquestionable."

The exponent of this "new teaching" informs us that he imbibed it from the late F. E. Raven, by whom, he asserts, it was set forth in a Bible Reading in the United States twenty-five years ago, though not included in the published notes of the Readings. Seeing that Mr. Raven is no longer here to verify what he is reported to have said, or explain the omission of his statements from the published notes, it would appear to most minds rather unseemly to raise the matter at this late date. However, it has been admitted by one, who had a large share in editing these American Notes, that extreme statements were made, and of so novel a character that they were not included as, it was feared, they might have led to division. Possibly then these extreme statements concerned the Eternal Sonship of Christ, in which case these statements have been suppressed for twenty-five years. Now, however, this teacher judges that the time is ripe to

unfold this teaching. The spiritual intelligence of the Barnet Conference, he informs us, warranted attention being called to it.

Thus linked with statements that virtually deny the Eternal Sonship of Christ is the claim of advanced spiritual intelligence. How ominous is this, when we remember that in Scripture the assembly that boasted of being rich and increased with goods is the same assembly of which we read Christ is outside the door

If, however, it is true that Mr. Raven held this teaching at that time of his visit to America, it is evident that he had altered his mind for the worse, for in a paper, entitled *"The Person of the Christ,"* he had written as follows:—

"The fourth Gospel is given to us to afford full light as to His Person, that is 'The Son,' and in this respect He is seen in three aspects, namely as eternally with the Father, as come into the world, and as going back to the Father, the same Person unchanged and unchangeable."

Thus it is clear that Mr. Raven once held and taught the truth of the Eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord, even if, as it is now suggested, he afterwards taught otherwise.

May we be delivered from the changing opinions of men, and have our minds and affections formed by the abiding Word of God! Thus settled in the truth, may we have grace given to resist every attack of the enemy on the Person of our adorable Lord, from whatever quarter it may come, and in whatever form it may appear. May we seek to "prove all things," and "hold fast that which is good," remembering the warning of the Lord, *"Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."*

Appendix 2.

Extracts from the ministry of well-known servants of the Lord, bearing on the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

Colossians 1:19. The Son is here presented to us as Creator, not to the exclusion of the Father's power, nor of the operation of the Spirit. They are one, but it is the Son who is here set before us. In John 1, it is under the name of Son, that He, who is also the Word, is revealed to us. He is the Word of God, the expression of His thought and of His power. It is by Him that God works and reveals Himself. He is also the Son of God; and in particular the Son of the Father. Inasmuch as born in this world by the operation of God through the Holy Ghost, He is the Son of God (Luke 1:35; Psalm 2:7). But this is in time, when creation is already the scene of the manifestation of the ways and counsels of God. But *the Son is also the name of the proper relationship of His glorious Person to the Father before the world was. It is in this character that He created all things.* (J. N. Darby. *Synopsis* v. 15).

Though what is called "the eternal Sonship" be *a vital truth, or we lose the Father sending the Son, and the Son creating, and we have no Father if we have no Son, so that it lies at the basis of all truth,* yet, in the historical presentation of Christianity, the Son is always presented as down

here in servant and manhood estate, as all through John, though in heaven and one with the Father.
(J. N. Darby. *Notes and Comments* ii. 423).
It was the Son that created in Hebrews 1, and in Colossians 1; and as to being Son in the eternal state, He says, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world": again, "I leave the world and go to the Father": and you have no Father if you have no Son. If I do not know Him as Son when He came into the world, I have no mission from God at all. And you get, too, the Father sent the Son.
"Son of the Father" and "Son of God" are the same essentially, only one is personal relationship, the other nature. But there are persons who take it that Christ was only Son as come into the world. The positive answer is given to this in Hebrews and Colossians, that by Him, the Son, the world was made. He is also called the Son as born into this world. There is "This day have I begotten thee," in Psalm 2. That is not quite the same thing, though the same Person, of course. He was begotten in time, that is true, as to His human state.
But Hebrews and Colossians are conclusive. It is of immense import, because I have not the Father's love sending the Son out of heaven, if I have not Him as Son before born into the world. The Son gives up the Kingdom to the Father in 1 Corinthians 15. I lose all that the Son is, if He is only so as incarnate, and you have lost all the love of the Father in sending the Son as well. "I have declared thy name and will declare it," will declare it is now. He did it on earth, and does still, and I believe will do it to all eternity if you take the general statement of Scripture.
(J. N. Darby. *Collected Writings, xxv.* 340).
"I say not that I will pray the Father for you as if the Father did not Himself love you; for the Father Himself loves you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God. This they had believed, but knew not yet in its fulness, known thus by the Holy Ghost (the Spirit of sonship given), namely, that He came forth from *the Father.* In this they were dull: it is the life of the saints. And this it is that makes the notion of sonship in Christ only when incarnate so destructive to the very elementary joy of the Church, and abhorrent to those who have communion by the Spirit in the truth."
(J. N. Darby. *Collected Writings, iii.* 135).
"The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." … There was a living Person there who said He was sent. Nor was it merely when in this world, that He was sent, for He says: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father."
(J. N. Darby. *Notes and Comments,* iii. 395).
"No man has seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18). Now, it is no longer a question of nature, but of relationship; and hence it is not said simply the Word, but the Son, and the Son in the highest possible character, the only-begotten Son, distinguishing Him thus from any other who might, in a subordinate sense, be son of God—"the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father."

Observe: not which was, but "which *is.*" He is viewed as retaining the same perfect intimacy with the Father, entirely unimpaired by local or any other circumstances He had entered. Nothing in the slightest degree detracted from His own personal glory, and from the infinitely near relationship which He had had with the Father from all eternity. He entered this world, became flesh, as born of woman; but there was no diminution of His own glory, when He, born of the virgin, walked on earth, or when rejected of men, cut off as Messiah, He was forsaken of God for sin—our sin—on the cross. Under all changes, outwardly, He abode as from eternity the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father.

(W. Kelly. *Lectures introductory to the Gospels,* 462, 463).

I doubt not the Lord is called "the Son of God" in different respects. He is so called as being born of the Virgin (Luke 1:35). He is so by Divine decree, as in resurrection (Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33). This is true, and remains true, though further revelation be made to us of His divine Sonship. He is the Son, and yet has obtained the name of Son (Heb. 1:1-3). Matthew and Mark first notice His Sonship of God at His baptism. Luke goes further back and notices it at His birth. But John goes farther back still, even to the immeasurable unspeakable distance of eternity, and declares His Sonship in the bosom of the Father.

… It was once asked me, had the Father no bosom till the Babe was born in Bethlehem? Indeed fully sure I am, as that enquiry suggests, He had from all eternity. The bosom of the Father was an eternal habitation, enjoyed by the Son, in the ineffable delight of the Father—"the hiding-place of love," as one has called it, "of inexpressible love which is beyond glory; for glory may be revealed, this cannot."

The soul may have remained unexercised about such thoughts as these, but the saints cannot admit their denial.

"Lamb of God, Thy Father's bosom
Ever was Thy dwelling place."

The soul dare not surrender such a mystery to the thoughts of men. Faith will dispute such ground with "philosophy and vain deceit." Even the Jews may rebuke the difficulty which some feel to it. They felt that the Lord asserting His *Sonship* amounted to a making of Himself equal with God. So that, instead, of Sonship implying a secondary or inferior Person, in their thought it asserted *equality.* And in like manner, on another occasion, they treat Jesus as a blasphemer, because He was making Himself *God,* in a discourse which was declaring the relationship of *a son to a father* (John 5 and 10). The Jews may thus, again and again, rebuke this wretched, unbelieving difficulty which "the vain deceit" of man suggests. They were wiser than to pretend to test the light where God dwells by the prism of human reasonings.

… Deprive Him of the bosom of the Father from all eternity, and ask your soul, has it lost nothing in its apprehension and joy of this precious mystery, thus unfolded from everlasting to

everlasting? I cannot understand a saint pleading for such a thing. Nor can I consent to join in any confession that tells my Heavenly Father, it was not His own Son He gave up for me.

… The Son, the only begotten Son, the Son of the Father, emptied Himself that He might do the Divine pleasure in the service of wretched sinners. But will the Father suffer it, that sinners, for whom all this humiliation was endured, shall take occasion from it to depreciate the Son? This cannot be, as John 5:23, tells us. Jesus had declared that God was His *Father,* "making *Himself equal* with God." It is a question, *will God vindicate Him in that saying?* And yet, He is scarcely justified in it by the thought of those who deny Sonship in the Godhead. But the Father will not receive honour, if it be not rendered to the Son as we read, "he that honours not the Son, honours not the Father which has sent Him."

*(The Son of God,** J. G. Bellett).

{** It is interesting that the extracts from the writings of the late J. G. Bellett are taken from his book, "The Son of God," which was expressly written for the help of saints amongst whom this same pernicious doctrine, attacking the Eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ, was prevalent. Happily it was used to their deliverance. Mr. Bellett passed away in 1864, so it is seen that these attacks of the enemy are no new thing.*}

The glory beheld was of an Only-begotten with the Father: One in whom the divine nature was, not as what might be in some true sense communicable to the creature, but in a way unique, peculiar to Himself; not derived, therefore, from the Manhood He assumed, but His relationship in the Godhead; "*with* the Father implying that communion in the Godhead, the necessary result of this.

(Numerical Bible, F. W. Grant).

"The only-begotten Son who is "literally, "the One being" or "abiding"—"in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (told Him out). The unchanging intimacy of the eternal relationship is here that which qualifies Him as the perfect Revealer of God; according to what He was before made known to us to be "the *Word* made flesh." … He is not love for an occasion, however great may be the occasion. Nor is the Son become Son for display, however glorious. The Father had no beginning as the Father, nor the Son therefore as the Son. If otherwise then after all we have not a revelation of eternity, nor of God as He is, but only as He is *pleased to become*—a very different thing. Thank God it is not so. We know how God dwelt in love eternally: we have the Object of that love made known to us.

(The Crowned Christ, F. W. Grant).

He was the eternal Son, and the eternal Son had become man. This is entirely beyond the grasp of the creature. He was even beyond the comprehension of those associated with Him, for "no one knows the Son but the Father." The first thing spoken of in the Epistle to the Hebrews is the greatness of His Person, and then of the throne, but the Person is far greater than the throne. It was in the eternal counsels that He should become man, and as such He is the adequate object for the affection and love of God His Father. "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into

His hand." He was as man of the divine nature, and therefore enough for the love of God. The next thing is, He is invited to ask, "Ask of Me," etc. Now these words could not be spoken of any one but the Eternal Son.

(Notes of Lectures, F. E. Raven, xvii. 192, 193).

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